

## Department Curriculum Discussions—August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Here is a compilation and summary of the reports on department meetings. Some departments focused mostly on documenting what they already do with respect to the SIP while others did more work setting curriculum goals for this year. Clearly though, there is a desire to do more interdisciplinary work, and perhaps these meetings and these summative documents, along with ATLAS itself, could help facilitate the kinds of communications that must occur in order for that work to happen. Other common themes were transitions between grade levels and ethical issues, especially respect. I encourage departments to think not only about what they want to change about their curriculum, but how using ATLAS can help them study their respective curricula and the place of that curriculum within the large context of our school.

**Science:** data analysis, interdisciplinary, & greening

**Physical Education:** ethical issues & interdisciplinary

**Fine Arts:** transitions & technology

**Math:** work on essential questions & assessments

**World Languages:** transitions, interdisciplinary, & ethical issues

**Social Science:** interdisciplinary & greening

**English:** assessment (use of rubrics & standardizing assessment across instructors)

**Science:**

Science Department-wide aims for Sem 1 to be specifically addressed via Curriculum Mapping:

- Data analysis
- Greening

As you might guess, these two goals were selected from a more extensive list of ideas. The factors used to make these selections were:

- Feasibility—how well would/do they work within our current curriculum
- Depth/breadth—how other identified ideas/goals could be subsumed within each selection
- Need—how useful might these be to further departmental pedagogical goals and be useful to student's in the long term
- Alignment with SIP

See next page for interdisciplinary brainstorming

## Science (con't):

### Possible Interdisciplinary/Global Topics

\*\*these are items the department is already doing

6<sup>th</sup> grade:

With Social Studies--Mapping (latitude & longitude-hurricane tracking)

With Math--Scientific Notation

With Math—graphing & ordered pairs

With English—Earth Day poems\*\*

With AP Enviro--Day on the Bay\*\*

With English—Lorax

7<sup>th</sup> grade:

With PE—pulse recovery\*\*

With Art—drawing to scale (i.e. through microscope)

With English—Diary of Anne Frank?? & Human Anatomy

With English—Lorax & Ecology\*\*

8<sup>th</sup> grade:

With English—Pinhole camera haiku\*\*

With English—Using Pinhole camera images for prose\*\*

With Math—Scientific Notation & Calculation

9<sup>th</sup> grade:

With World Civilizations—WWII Nazi experiments/BioEthics

With World Civilizations—Population Dynamics and BRIC countries

With PE/Waterfront—Mangrove walk\*\*

With English—Freshman Paper

With World Languages—Classification of Organisms

10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade:

With Fine Arts—Physics photo project (part of a national competition)

With Fine Arts—guest lecture on time & light with photography

With English—Science Fiction class guest lectures on selected topics

With Fine Arts & History—Determining Earth's Magnetic field from fired pottery

With Social Studies—History & Science of Atomic Bomb

With AP Calc—Taylor Series

With Social Studies—History of S.Fla. native tribes/human geography

With Fine Arts—Wildlife photography

With English—Lit. of Sea boat trip\*\*

With Fine Arts—Arch & Design Stiltsville trip\*\*

With PE—Anatomy & Physiology coursework

With Math—climate readings with Stats

With PE/LifeSkills—guest lecture about alcohol

## Physical Education:

Mapping will be beneficial to help us study

what we are teaching

how are we teaching

student-friendly questions

scope and sequence – a smooth transition from MS to US

(change of facility should help decrease gap of learning curve from 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade)

(we can do more cooperative activities in 8<sup>th</sup> grade)

common themes

assessment

**\*BIG FOCAL POINT\*** - We teach ethical issues every single day – probably more than any other discipline  
PE is typically more about ethical issues than “sports skills”

We cover:

Respect

Sportsmanship

Cooperation

Fitness

Responsibility

### SIP goals

Interdisciplinary

Research

Technology

Pedagogy of Inquiry

Greening

Discussion of each goal – what we are doing now and what we can do to improve

How is mapping going to help with interdisciplinary?

PE can continue to be very flexible to move units to coincide with other subject areas for interdisciplinary projects

## Fine Arts:

- How to help students transition from middle school to upper school:
  - Kate's collaborative prj. With 8<sup>th</sup> graders making students more responsible for own work as a transition to 9<sup>th</sup> grade and learning how to do independent and self driven work and assignment
    - 8<sup>th</sup> grade film proj. group
      - Come up with production co., budget, scripts, shooting calendar, etc.
      - Must shoot it and edit it by project deadline with check points throughout
      - Teaches teamwork and helps students work as a cohesive group as a transition to the upper school
  - Elsa does portrait assign.
    - More self driven and more independent than other projects that are more structured
    - Encourage students to make their own choices and reflect on what makes for interesting composition
  - POTENTIAL PROBLEM AREA:
    - Continuity of the art history concept from middle to upper school.
      - Upper school art history starts at 1450 A.D. but there is no foundation of art history covering art from beginning of time to 1450 in the middle school
    - POTENTIAL SOLUTION:
      - Start teaching art history to 8<sup>th</sup> graders who have a little more maturity
  - Sketch book that students in the middle school keep throughout their career at Ransom Everglades School which be an asset help students see how their art changes and as a reference tool of artistic techniques
    - Additionally, it will help the upper school teachers get an idea of what work the students have an affinity for
  - PERFORMING ARTS:
    - Vertical teaming for music theory in middle and upper school classes
    - General performing arts integration
    - Integrating more multimedia in lesson plans
      - Podcasting in 6<sup>th</sup> grade
      - Film proj. in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade
      - Implementing more playwriting in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade with the hope of carry over into upper school
      - Sean is developing curriculum based on classic acting techniques
  - SIP
    - GLOBAL
      - Middle school studio art talked about integrating global art more into curriculum particularly looking at it from a SE Asian perspective

**Math:**

- Discussed the first unit of the Pre-Calculus Honors course. Added topics to content and skills to make answering the essential questions easier for students (Jean's goal is to present the students with essential questions all year and have the students answer them).
- Discussed other types of assessment, including electronic discussions.
- Discussed Math 6 next. Discussed adding some topics to the content to make the unit more complete.
- Discussed how to clarify topics on the SIP column because of the limitation of the check box. (OK we really are bothered by the checkbox. Can we work on this? When we check a checkbox is there a way for text to automatically be linked to a particular check? (right now the text appears in the middle and is a bit unclear)
- We discussed the links on Atlas and whether it would be feasible to link directly to Edline because many of us have links to all of our assignments there. We decided against this because Edline is too in depth.
- We discussed Algebra 2 next. As a group we really liked their essential questions. We are excited about trying the electronic discussion of essential questions.
- We discussed including pictures of completed projects in the project assignment sheets so that when you link the assignment sheet to Atlas you can see these.
- Finally, we discussed AP Statistics. Henry has lots of essential questions, so we talked about reducing the number of essential questions. Talked about a project based on one of the essential questions of the course.

### World Languages:

1. Review: in many courses, we spend the first few weeks reviewing grammar and vocabulary from previous years. I think most of us would like to spend less time on this (four weeks is a lot, for example, in Spanish 2, to review), and maybe next year during second semester we can try to figure out how to slow down and spend more time on new topics so that the review time the following year can be decreased in order to allow for more time to learn new material. One suggestion was to integrate review throughout the year and to recycle material. Dominique mentioned integrating a lot of culture into the review section and then putting the grammar and vocabulary as "skills".
2. Essential questions: we looked at questions from Spanish 7 and Spanish 5: C and C to see if we were on board with the culture/ grammar combo- we were.
3. Communicative competence: ensuring that students can converse well in the language. Some factors that interfere with this can be not having enough time in class, an intimidation to speak, need to spend more time in class speaking, not all students can have quality conversation every day. In AP Language, this is not an issue as the students are well-prepared to speak, but how about non-AP kids? Some ideas to promote speaking:
  - pair kids off using language together
  - exchange teachers for last 10 minutes of class
  - Having rubrics for oral presentations/ assessments for oral presentations
  - Spontaneous conversation- but NEED to supervise
  - We could establish a "communication goal" every chapter or whatever to promote fluency in speaking. We have to work on spontaneous dialogue.

### Interdisciplinary/Global Awareness

1. How do we define Interdisciplinary? Is it necessary to have a teaching partner in another department? Is it team teaching? Or, is it teaching geography, ecology, religion, and history in a World Language class?
2. Use MAP for communication. Can we search by word on Atlas for specific themes, e.g., Existentialism? **Yes, just use the "Search" tab and you can search for anything you want, with whatever filters (department, grade level, etc) that you want.**
3. Seventh grade has team meetings to discuss themes: e.g., Human Rights for Seventh Grade. Challenge for US: students in one grade do not take the same courses. How will US teachers learn what other teachers in their grade are teaching? Idea: brief presentations at all-school meetings by Department Heads. **How about looking at ATLAS?**
4. Ethics. Teach respect for religion and traditions of other cultures in World Language classes of all levels. **Offers opportunities for interdisciplinary work, especially with Social Science and English.**

### Greening/Global Awareness

1. Interdisciplinary topic of Bolivian environment between Spanish and Science classes (brainstorming idea)
2. Experiential learning day for Seventh graders on Island Clean up Day.
3. Emphasize Brazil (location of tropical rain forest) in World Civilization and Flex courses. **Brazil is a region of focus in the revised World Civ curriculum; maybe a chance to work with Social Science (World Civ OR Global Studies) here.**
4. Readings and discussions on pollution and the environment in target language in World Language classes, all levels. U/S French classes plant palm trees in coordination with book, *The Man Who Planted Trees* (experiential learning).

### Integration of Technology

1. Use SmartBoards in all classes. Challenges: pens sometimes missing, system decalibrates itself easily, some colors don't work or smear, class time is wasted. Faculty wants to use the technology, but universally state that the technology is often problematic. Once we lose our technology, we lose our class.
2. SmartBoards are good for completing worksheets on the board. Invite Ana Meneses or Marisa Phirangee to give a class.
3. We LOVE the document camera. It never fails. Students love to work on it. It's the best!!!!

## **Research**

1. Intention to use library databases for Flex and research projects in all World Language classes.
2. Students in middle school know how to use computer for entertainment but have not been formally introduced yet to using it for academic research.



## Social Science:

- Ethical issues in our Curriculum
  - come up a lot in our curriculum already
- Map should be an accurate reflection of what we do not an ideal.
  - should be updated as we work
- School improvement goals, especially interdisciplinary, greening, and globalization
  - there was a little confusion as what that means or how far do we take it.
  - due to the nature of our subject area we do a pretty good job of globalization
  - it is difficult to link our curriculum to other departments due to time constraints and an inability to link up makes it difficult.
  - Many of us tend to explore interdisciplinary topics within our current curriculum using literature, art, music, science, math, etc. Some are comfortable with the amount that they do, others feel that they could do more.
  - having an interdisciplinary approach to teaching can work. Not necessary to introduce new material
  - talked a bit about how Russ and Kate include environmental issues in Global and Middle Eastern Studies
  - 6<sup>th</sup> grade is changing when they cover China so that they are interlinked with Flex and English
  - Ana uses art, lit, music throughout the year to supplement
- Environmental issues
  - In US History we could take about agricultural patterns and land use, Industrial revolution, creation of national parks, protests of the 1960's.
  - Colonization and how it has effected resources today (New England overfishing)
  - Conservation movement
  - also use greening in our classroom, turn in papers electronically, online discussions
  - teach an era through a different lens
  - Fergusson teaches environmental issue in Comparative Government on each country that they cover.
  - document cams have helped significantly to lessen the amount of handouts
- Goals
  - Kate wants to include it in every unit rather than for China
  - 6<sup>th</sup> grade could include it in each unit as well
  - Coach is going to try to link environmentalism to his US history class
  - create more Wiki pages from some of our classes, particularly to share resources.
- Group goals
  - more environmental readings included in our curriculum
  - wiki pages
  - more interdisciplinary work with our own classes
  - Using each other as resources for our classes

## **English:**

### **Rubrics**

The place for rubrics and how we want to use them in the curriculum

The possibility of using the “6 + 1” writing rubric and rubistar.com (also, using these rubrics across the school curriculum for writing assignments)

### **Critical Friends**

A protocol based approach to studying other teachers’ materials and helping them troubleshoot ideas I learned about this at Klingenstein this summer and it looks promising – I’m planning on doing some sort of pilot with it and then I’ll let you know how it goes...here is a quick link to a presentation of it:

[http://maha.tc.columbia.edu/moodle/file.php/21/KLING\\_CRITICAL\\_FRIENDS09.ppt](http://maha.tc.columbia.edu/moodle/file.php/21/KLING_CRITICAL_FRIENDS09.ppt)

### **Usage**

We talked about the possible need to standardize usage expectations, but it was mostly a discussion, not a conclusive finding

Two poles – skills versus holistic – emerged and we basically came down on the need for balance

### **Diagnostic**

Using the same test for grammar as we use for the end of the year so we can assess how students have progressed

Also using the data to determine strengths and weaknesses of incoming students

### **Greening**

Talked about how we have examples of greening awareness in the curriculum from books such as the Transcendentalists, poetry, and the Diary of a Young Girl

### **Daniel Pink**

The idea of using a writing portfolio to help with symphony – lots of teachers use them

How students “play” with language with poetry, but also how they act out scenes from texts, plays, etc We felt that we generally used Pink’s concepts already, and discussed the need and value of naming them within our maps.

In this discussion, Mike discussed Grant Wiggin’s “Understanding by Design” and how that informs our map

**Curriculum work for this year:** We agreed that—to the degree we have time—we would work on the following goals during the year:

- Decide at the school level and then at the grade level if we want to use a standardized rubric like the 6 + 1 traits, or if we will make specific rubrics for specific assignments.
- Discuss what common writing assignments we will have at each grade level.
- Meet by grade level to discuss writing assessment, which includes not only the above discussion on rubrics but also assessing model student papers. One exercise in relation to this would be for each teacher to grade the same essay and, then, to compare individual evaluations through discussion. (When gathering sample essays for this exercise, it is important that teachers see the specific assignment that was given by the teacher.) Another exercise would be to begin building “quality banks” of essays: that is, at each grade level we would have a copy of what is an A paper, a B paper, and a C paper for common assignments. These same essays in the bank may also serve as models for students.